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SOME NOTES ON OLD MONTREAL.

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BY EDWARD MURPHY, ESQ.

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## Some Notes on Old Montreal.

*(A Paper read before a meeting of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Montreal.)*

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**A**GREEABLY to a promise made at the last meeting of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society, I beg to read a short paper on the necessity of a "Topographical History of Montreal," and crave your indulgence for its crude manner.

If time permits, I shall illustrate this paper by reading some extracts from notes which I have made from time to time, during many years past, on the streets of Old Montreal.

Although we may not have (and in point of fact have not) as much historic matter to draw from as Mr. LeMoine has had for his admirable work on the streets of Quebec, yet there is much of interest to be collected even here, indeed quite enough to make up a good-sized volume.

The general design of the work, in my opinion, should be a topographical history of the streets of Montreal, including such archæological and antiquarian matters as can be collected. The writer or compiler should lead his readers through the streets of the city and suburbs, noting as he goes along the present old buildings and the sites of older ones still, where such and such important or notable personages of the past lived, describing the buildings (few now remain) and giving at the same time the history and other matters of interest connected with the localities—

such as biographical notices, anecdotes and traditions that have been handed down of the persons who formerly figured in connection with the places described.

Without entering further into details as to what such a work should take up, I may remark here that as late as 1840 St. Paul, St. Francois Xavier, St. Sacrament, Notre Dame and others of our present business streets contained the private residences of many of our first citizens, where stores and warehouses only are now to be seen. Indeed, I may say that previous to 1837 not half-a-dozen of our merchants and professional men lived outside of the old city proper, viz., from McGill Street to Dalhousie Square, and back to Craig Street, which was its northern boundary. At that time, and even later, St. Louis Street and its "Seven Galleries,"\* a terrace of one story buildings, were the fashionable residences of the military of the day.

Very few of the present generation can have any idea of the great changes that have taken place since 1840. In St. Sacrament Street, on the site now occupied by the Merchants' Exchange, stood, a little off the street, with lilac trees growing in the parterre, the residence of Mr. St. George Dupré. He was one of the old noblesse, a very *distingué* looking little man.† The next house to Mr. Dupré's was the town residence of the de Lotbiniere family; this still stands, and is the present No. 17. It is the last of the old buildings standing in that street.

Hospital Street, forty years ago, had in it some respectable private residences. In a long building next to the North British Chambers, Maitland, Tylee & Co. had their stores, and Mr. Maitland lived over the warehouse. At the

\*So called from a terrace of seven houses, each with a gallery in front.

†I remember him well, every fine morning in the summer season, taking his "constitutional airing" on horseback, either down St. Francois Xavier Street to the river or upon his way to the suburbs.

present Nos. 10 and 12 in that street was located Workman's Academy—an institution which turned out a greater number of able and successful commercial men and bankers than any school of the day. I may name here, among many others, the late Benjamin Lyman, Hon. L. H. Holton, A. M. Delisle, Thos. Workman, Alfred Savage and others.

In St. Paul Street, forty years ago, most of the merchants lived over their stores or warehouses, and many of them boarded their clerks with their own families. Between thirty-five and forty years ago the late Hon. George Moffatt lived next door to the extensive warehouses of the firm; a portion of these buildings still remain, representing the present Nos. 310 to 316. The late John Carter, James Shuter and others also resided over their warehouses. The late John Torrance, up to about 1840, lived over his store, on the south-west corner of St. Paul and St. Nicholas Streets. William Lyman lived over his stores—present Nos. 452 and 454 St. Paul Street. And so on of others.

Notre Dame Street, at the time I write of (forty years ago) was, from McGill Street to Dalhousie Square, with the exception of a few shops opposite the Court House, all private dwellings.

A street or topographical history of Montreal—such as has been so well done for Quebec by J. M. LeMoine, Esq., and for Toronto by Dr. Scadding—is, I believe, a generally recognised want, and the writing of such a work should not be delayed. If put off much longer, it will be difficult, perhaps impossible, to write, as many of the old landmarks have passed away. House after house, church after church, public building after building have been pulled down to make way for the improvements which the increased business of the city demanded, thus obliterating the connection that a few years ago existed between the past and the present of our good city.

The general appearance of Montreal had changed but little during the half century previous to the Rebellion of 1837-38. Since that time, however, the changes have been very marked. About 1840 the city commenced to grow rapidly in population and commercial importance, necessitating the pulling down the buildings referred to and making the extensive improvements required to meet the increasing trade of the city.

Many of the present generation do not even know the sites of some of the most interesting of our old buildings, such as old Christ Church, old St. Andrew's Church, the "Old Market" place, old Jesuits' Church and grounds, site of old Jail; nor that the old French Church stood on the line of Notre Dame Street—the front facing Notre Dame Street west, and the back Notre Dame Street east—completely blocking the way, so that people had to pass round the Square in going from one part of the street to the other. The Hotel Dieu on St. Paul Street, the Grey Nunnery on Foundling Street, the Recollet Church on Notre Dame Street, and the old College on College Street, although but recently removed, are being forgotten, and another generation will in turn forget their sites.

The object of this paper is to call the attention of some one qualified for the task to the necessity of undertaking this work without delay and before the memory of, as well as the landmarks themselves, shall have entirely faded away. I am sure there are many in this city—indeed I know there are some in our own Society—well qualified to write such a history as I have suggested, which would in my opinion be well received, and, I have no doubt, be very popular and interesting. I think the public are ready for it.

Before closing, I may say that in my notes I have been careful in defining the sites of old public buildings and the private residences of some of the old noblesse and other

personages of note in the past. The positions of the various Points, such as *Pointe a Calliere*, *Point a Blondon*, &c.; localities known by certain names some years ago, but long since gone into disuse or changed, such as the Citadel Hill, &c., are carefully noted. Location of the watercourses that passed through the city—open streams in olden times—and the ornamental and other bridges that spanned them, now filled up and obliterated by the modern system of drainage, are described. Why old tanneries and breweries were built in certain locations? The style of architecture and appearance of buildings forty or fifty years ago,\* and some peculiarities of the manner of doing business at the time referred to. I have collected anecdotes of the past and have recorded some interesting matter, all of which I shall be happy to place at the disposal of anyone who will undertake the writing of a historic topography of the city of Montreal.

[MEM.—At the close of Mr. Murphy's paper, in accordance with his promise, he read copious extracts from his "Notes," which were full of pleasant memories and fully bore out the value of his suggestion that the publication of them would be of great interest. Mr. Murphy also exhibited several sketches of Old Montreal, illustrative of the style of old buildings, &c., &c.

The thanks of the members present closed the proceedings of the meeting.

We understand that the suggestion of publication was taken up by a leading member of the Society, and that a volume will be forthcoming at as early a date as possible; other interesting MSS. having been offered for the purpose.—ED. ANTIQUARIAN.]

\*The houses at the beginning of this century were generally of "rubble masonry" or of wood, one or two stories high—the former with iron shutters. Some houses on St. Paul Street were two or three stories high, of Ashlar masonry. The buildings in the old city proper were generally of stone.